



## Northampton DPW to start flood control upgrades with help from City Council

By **Fred Contrada, The Republican**

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**NORTHAMPTON** -- The Department of Public Works will try to meet an Army Corps of Engineers deadline for repairing and upgrading Northampton's flood control system with the help of \$250,000 redirected by the City Council.

The council will consider on Thursday whether to redesignate the money, part of a previous municipal bond for general purposes, for upkeep of the system of dikes and levees that protects Northampton from flooding. The remediation work will be the first step in an **expensive overhaul** and upgrade of the city's flood control and stormwater systems mandated by the federal government.

According to Department of Public Works Director Edward S. Huntley, the Army Corps of Engineers currently rates the flood control systems for both the **Mill** and Connecticut rivers "minimally acceptable," meaning they are expected to work during the next flood event but will fail if their shortcomings are not addressed.

Some of the deadlines for the work are as soon as next month. Although the city cannot meet those deadlines, Huntley said the Army Corps of Engineers has agreed to let the city prioritize the work.

"They know we don't have the money to do everything," Huntley said.

Immediate needs mostly involve removing trees and shrubs from dikes and levees, filling holes and repairing eroded areas, both near the West Street pump station on the Mill River and the **flood control station** behind the wastewater treatment plant near the Connecticut. In the long term, the corps recommends more expensive measures such as replacing the gasoline operated pumps with natural gas units and installing automated sump pumps in the basement of the flood control facility.

"That's a \$1 million project in itself," Huntley said.

At stake for the city is certification by the government. Without it, flood control maps would have to be redrawn showing new areas, including parts of downtown, at risk for flooding during a 100-year event. That would require property owners in the zone to purchase flood insurance, Huntley said.

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The flood control station at the Connecticut River.

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